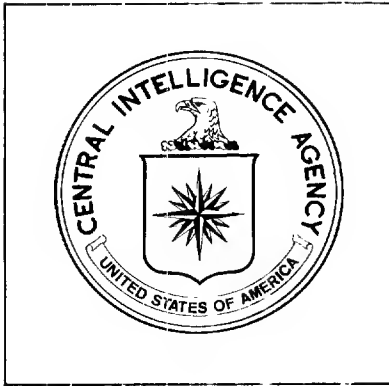


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MIDDLE EAST — AFRICA — SOUTH ASIA

This publication is prepared for regional specialists in the Washington community by the Middle East - Africa Division, Office of Current Intelligence, with occasional contributions from other offices within the Directorate of Intelligence. Comments and queries are welcome. They should be directed to the authors of the individual articles.

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South Yemen

Parties Merge

A new political party has been formed in South Yemen as a result of the merger of the local Communist and Baath organizations with the ruling National Front.

The new party, which will also be known as the National Front, will apparently use, at least at the national level, the existing structure of the old Front. According to Aden radio, the Front's central committee will be expanded from 53 to 79 members and its politburo from 12 to 16 members.

It is unclear at this time what influence the former Communists and Baathis can expect to have in the National Front. Discussions on the merger--in progress for over a year--bogged down in mid-1975 over the Communists' and Baathis' concern that leadership in the new structure would not be truly shared, and that overall direction of policy would remain in the hands of the old Front veterans.

The decision to merge the three parties at this time could be related to the ongoing political struggle between National Front Secretary General Abd al-Fattah Ismail and President Salim Rubayi Ali. Ismail has long wanted to bring the Communists and Baathis into the Front in the belief that they would strengthen his hand against Ali.



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The communique issued on October 13, at the end of the unification conference, in fact, reiterated Aden's support of the Dhofar rebels and called for a continuation of the struggle to overthrow Oman's Sultan Qabus. The communique also called for the further strengthening of Aden's ties with Moscow and other "socialist" countries. (SECRET NOFORN/NOCONTRACT/ORCON)

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Iran

Port Congestion

Because Iran's dry cargo ports are severely congested, Tehran signed a \$1 billion contract last month with an Italian-led consortium to build a new port at the eastern end of the Persian Gulf about 10 miles from the existing facilities at Bandar Abbas. According to the contractors, this is the largest foreign construction contract ever won by an Italian firm.

The new port will be able to handle around 8 million tons of cargo a year. The port will have special grain unloading equipment and a terminal designed for handling ships as large as 100,000 deadweight tons. In 3-5 years when the new port is operational, the facilities at Bandar Abbas will be turned over exclusively to the Imperial Iranian Navy.

Tehran also plans to link Bandar Abbas with the rest of Iran by rail. The closest existing rail line is about 200 miles away, near the desert city of Kerman. The government has announced that it intends to extend this line to Bandar Abbas by 1978.

Tehran has already begun enlarging its other major dry cargo ports at Khorramshahr and Bandar Shahpur. These ports now handle about five million tons of cargo a year, and should be able to accomodate an additional 1-2 million tons by 1977.

The expansion of Bandar Abbas, as well as other Persian Gulf ports, should help relieve the heavy congestion caused by the huge increase in imports during the past two years. Over 300 ships are currently waiting to unload at Bandar Abbas and there are delays of 50 days for general cargo ships and 90 days for chartered vessels. Conditions are even worse at Khorramshahr, Iran's largest port, where berthing delays of more than five months are being reported.

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Cargo is also being severely delayed in the port areas after it is unloaded--in some cases six months or longer--because of inadequate inland transport facilities and poor port clearance procedures. Thus, even when berthing facilities are expanded, efficient service will not be possible without improvements in port management, upgrading of the internal transport network, increased storage areas, and the acquisition of advanced cargo handling equipment. These problems are likely to persist well into the 1980s. (UNCLASSIFIED)



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India-Pakistan

Race for Security Council Seat

The hotly-contested three-way race among India, Pakistan, and the Philippines for a 2-year term (1976-77) on the UN Security Council probably will be decided next week, probably on October 20, by the General Assembly. Pakistan seems to be in the lead because of support from fellow-Muslim countries, but it appears to lack the necessary two-thirds majority to win in the first round of voting. The Philippines is regarded as a dark horse whose prospects will grow if neither India nor Pakistan can muster a majority in the first two ballots.

Over the past year both India and Pakistan have lobbied hard for the seat Iraq will vacate, and their unwillingness to compromise made it impossible for the Asian caucus to follow UN usual procedure of nominating a single candidate who is then endorsed by the General Assembly.

Last January, New Delhi apparently felt it had a good chance of winning even though India had a term as recently as 1972-73. India's intention reportedly was well received by the nonaligned nations. India was also given initial support by some of the Arabs largely because of New Delhi's consistently pro-Arab posture on important Middle East issues.

In the meantime Pakistan began campaigning vigorously in its own behalf, and accused India of seeking "semi-permanent" membership on the Security Council. Islamabad succeeded in capitalizing on its growing friendship with the Muslims and persuaded the Arab bloc to switch to a policy permitting each nation to vote individually. This was a serious setback for India and in recent weeks the Indian delegation at the UN, recognizing the growing possibility of defeat, has sharply curtailed its lobbying effort.

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Friends of both India and Pakistan have proposed alternate solutions such as splitting the term or offering either India or Pakistan the seat Japan will vacate in 1976. So far, however, neither New Delhi nor Islamabad has shown interest in such proposals. (CONFIDENTIAL)



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